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## ***DOE Headquarters Taking Over Long-Term Stewardship Program***

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Following criticism from some state officials, a top Energy Department official has announced DOE headquarters will take over the department's program for assuring adequate long-term monitoring and environmental protection at nuclear weapons sites that retain residual radioactive waste after cleanup. The October 26 announcement by Jessie Roberson supercedes a previous agreement between DOE headquarters and the Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory and the department's Grand Junction, Colo., office. The agreement generally called for the two field sites to develop requirements and policy for the "long-term stewardship" program. "I am consolidating the programmatic and policy lead for long-term stewardship at headquarters," Roberson said in an internal memo. "Stewardship is an important component of the overall cleanup effort, thus policy and direction needs to come from headquarters. "This change will allow us to better focus the efforts of the Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory on the scientific and technical aspects of long-term stewardship."

Roberson also said DOE's Office of Long Term Stewardship would review existing and proposed regulatory requirements for monitoring and environmental protection following the completion of cleanup operations at DOE sites. She said the review would look at "post-closure" requirements now in place at specific sites as well as broader environmental compliance documents that are under development for long term stewardship. Overall, she said the review was designed to "clarify the purpose of the long term stewardship program" before DOE commits to any monitoring obligations that might be subject to enforcement by state or federal regulators. "We need to know where we stand before we enter into new policy regarding post-closure enforceable actions," she said. Roberson also said DOE had to improve its outreach to state, local and tribal governments affected by DOE cleanup. Roberson's announcement followed complaints by Missouri officials about long-term stewardship planning at DOE's Weldon Spring site in that state. The former uranium processing facility will be the first major DOE weapons site to finish cleanup. But while completion of active cleanup is expected within a year, some contaminated soil and groundwater will remain in place with environmental controls to prevent radioactive or toxic seepage offsite. Missouri officials wrote Roberson in late September saying DOE officials had failed to make adequate plans for long-term stewardship at Weldon Spring and that past DOE commitments now looked like "empty promises." They also said the stewardship program generally was mired in a "management muddle" where DOE's Grand Junction field office and others had failed to set clear stewardship policy. The criticism has broad implications for DOE's nuclear cleanup program because the department is saving huge sums of money by burying certain wastes in place at numerous nuclear weapons sites. The plans call for putting clay caps over contaminated soil and other bulk low-level radioactive wastes rather than digging them up and hauling them to offsite disposal facilities.